

444715

8/7/79

R 16979ZSAZOTWYD

444-ADVISEASE

WASHINGTON, AUG 7, REUTER - ABOUT 8,000 SOVIET MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PEOPLE ARE NOW SERVING IN CUBA AS ADVISERS TO THE FIDEL CASTRO GOVERNMENT, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SOURCES SAID TODAY. THE ESTIMATE WAS PROVIDED TO COUNTER RECURRING REPORTS THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS GREATLY INCREASED ITS PRESENCE IN CUBA WITH LARGE COMBAT UNITS OR THE FRAMEWORK FOR A MAJOR MILITARY COMMAND.

PENTAGON SPOKESMAN TOM ROSS TOLD REPORTERS TODAY THERE MAY HAVE BEEN "A VERY MODEST INCREASE" IN THE 15-YEAR-OLD SOVIET PRESENCE IN CUBA BUT "NOTHING SUBSTANTIAL."

MR ROSS DID NOT SAY HOW MANY SOVIET MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL WERE IN CUBA BUT DEPARTMENT SOURCES LATER PLACED THE TOTAL AT ABOUT 2,000 MILITARY AND 6,000 CIVILIANS.

THE SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL INCLUDE PILOT INSTRUCTORS AND NAVAL TRAINING PERSONNEL, THE SOURCES SAID.

THE SOVIET CIVILIANS AID THE CUBANS IN DEVELOPING THEIR AGRICULTURAL AND MARITIME INDUSTRIES, THEY SAID.

DEFENSE SECRETARY HAROLD BROWN TOLD THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE ON JULY 17 THAT HE HAD SEEN NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE CONFIRMING THE EXISTENCE OF ANY NEW SOVIET MILITARY COMMITMENT OR RECENT SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ITS CUBAN FORCE.

REUTER 1740